

## **Appendix B.**

### **DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **BLUE-EYED NELLIE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

### **MOORE/FIVE VALLEYS LAND TRUST PROPERTY**

The Moore property is adjacent to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area (WMA). If acquired by FWP the property will add 29.74 acres to the WMA and increase the total size of the complex to 489.36 acres in five parcels. The Moore property will be managed as an addition to existing lands and according to the same principles and regulations. The Management Plan for Blue-eyed Nellie WMA follows. The plan has three objectives: 1) Prevent soil erosion and conserve and improve vegetation communities, striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types; 2) Manage for wintering bighorn sheep use during short periods of extreme winter conditions and early spring green up; maintain existing non-game species; and 3) Provide for public hunting and recreation.



*Moore property looking west, Highway 1 and Garrity Mountain on the left.*

# **Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area Management Plan**

*10/5/09 revision*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Blue-eyed Nellie WMA currently includes 459.62-acres north of Montana Highway 1 in the West Valley area of Anaconda. The WMA is comprised of a series of acquisitions designed to protect and maintain bighorn sheep winter range for the Lost Creek herd of bighorn sheep, as well as provide important seasonal and year-around habitat for a variety of other wildlife species. These lands adjoin 12,000 acres acquired by the U.S. Forest Service through the Lost Creek land exchange.

The purpose of these acquisitions is to provide critical winter range for bighorn sheep, retain the connectivity of habitats north and south of Highway 1, and to retain public access to Stucky Ridge. The properties provide an area for development of a public watchable wildlife area and an interpretive site. They also allow for better public access management by providing gates to enforce seasonal vehicle closures at the beginning of the Tin Can and Blue-eyed Nellie Gulches.

### *Area Description*

The original Blue-eyed Nellie WMA was composed of 6 acres located off North Cable Road approximately 6 miles west of Anaconda. The WMA was increased in 2006 by the addition of the 97-acre Long Property in January and the addition of the 59-acre North Lily addition in April. In 2008 and 2009, the Jameson property additions totaling 296 acres were secured. The WMA will expand by another 29.74 acres if the Moore acquisition is approved.

The properties encompass native grasslands, shrub-grasslands, and cliffs in the West Valley of Anaconda. A small grove of cottonwoods occurs on the original WMA, which is divided into two parcels of approximately of 2 and 4 acres with the Anaconda Gun Club in the middle.

## **GOAL**

Manage for highly productive, diverse vegetative communities that will provide high quality forage and cover for native wildlife species, with an emphasis on bighorn sheep; manage for hunting and other recreational opportunities for the public and access to National Forest lands; and provide a site for wildlife viewing and interpretation.

Objective 1: Prevent soil erosion and conserve and improve the vegetation communities, striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types.

Problem 1: Noxious weeds have become established on the property.

Strategy: Determine the extent and degree of noxious weed problem and

implement a weed control program utilizing biological and chemical controls.

Problem 2: Boundary fences are incomplete.

Strategy: Currently there are no conflicts with trespass livestock, but fences should be maintained or reconstructed to direct motor vehicle travel.

Problem 3: Effects of public access. Increased public access, particularly with respect to vehicles, can result in habitat damage.

Strategy: Prohibit off road vehicle use. Vehicle access should be restricted to established roads. Enforce seasonal closures consistent with current travel management on adjacent USFS lands. Provide adequate parking facilities and signing to protect soils and vegetation.

Objective 2: Manage for wintering bighorn sheep use during short periods of extreme winter conditions and early spring green up; maintain existing non-game species.

Problem 1: Noxious weeds have reduced forage availability on portions of the WMA.

Strategy: Implement weed management program using biological and chemical weed control to restore native grasslands.

Problem 2: The Blue-eyed Nellie WMA represents only a portion of critical habitat that is not in public ownership.

Strategy: Pursue further acquisition options with the Atlantic Richfield Company and other parties. These properties could be managed as further additions to the Blue-eyed Nellie WMA.

Objective 3: Provide for public hunting and recreation.

Problem 1: Public access to adjacent USFS lands must be maintained. The Blue-eyed Nellie road is not a declared county road.

Strategy: Complete acquisition of the Moore property, which would make the road public from North Cable Road to the Forest Service boundary.

Problem 2: Wildlife viewing and interpretation opportunities have been restricted due to lack of public property along Highway 1 and North Cable Road.

Strategy: Provide parking areas for access during seasonal closures and wildlife viewing. Pursue joint interpretative signing and displays with the USFS regarding the Lost Creek bighorn sheep population and habitat.

## **MONITORING**

Management Actions: Management actions will be evaluated through the MEPA process.

Vegetation: Vegetation transects may be established; these transects will aim to determine species composition, plant succession, and forage production. Transects will be monitored on a regular basis to determine long-term trends.

Population: Ground and aircraft surveys will monitor numbers of bighorn sheep annually. Seasonal use will be monitored during periods of extreme weather conditions and spring green up.

Public use: Public use will be determined by public contact. This information will be used to direct travel and seasonal restrictions.